



20th October 2021

Dear Co-Chairs of the BFUG,

I am writing to express our concern regarding the Belarusian co-chairmanship of the Bologna Follow Up Group foreseen for the semester July-December 2022. If this planning is upheld, Belarus will be part of the Bologna Board as of January 2022.

The Belarusian situation was addressed by 24 countries and 6 consultative members of the EHEA¹ in the Statement on the situation in Belarus at the Rome 2020 Ministerial Conference². It was re-iterated by a recent letter of the European Students' Union towards the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus and the National Academy of Science of Belarus³, disseminated to all the members of the BFUG and to which no response has been received to date.

We would like to express our concern and scepticism regarding Belarus performing the co-chairing role, given that half of the EHEA members have distrusted it in upholding to our fundamental values.

In the current Bologna cycle, the BFUG is called to work on a definition for each of the fundamental values and to develop a monitoring framework of their implementation, having already defined academic freedom: a definition signed by the Belarusian Ministry, too, but with no follow up in relieving the climate of repression towards civil society and academia within the country.

The European Parliament resolution of 7 October 2021 on the situation in Belarus after one year of protests and their violent repression (2021/2881(RSP))⁴, highlights the deplorable situation for human rights and democracy in Belarus that has led the EU to impose a number of restrictive measures on Belarusian authorities. In particular, the EP resolution calls for Belarusian MPs and officials to not be invited to any international or bilateral events. Furthermore, the European Union already sanctioned 4 Belarusian University leaders⁵ for their role in the repression of students inside their institutions.

We send this letter, which is supported also by the EUA, EURASHE and ENQA, in view of the upcoming BFUG Board Meeting this Thursday 21st of October, asking you and the Board to ensure that the issue of the scheduled Belarusian Co-Chairmanship of the BFUG, and their membership in the Board, is put on the agenda of the December BFUG.

With kind regards,

Martina Darmanin, President of ESU

¹ http://www.ehea.info/Upload/Belarus_statement_list_countries_and_consultative_members.pdf

² http://www.ehea.info/Upload/BFUG_DE_UK_74_Co-chairs_Statement_situation_Belarus.pdf

³ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IU_tARQBFf9G_Fw9uNcY_q3TD4zf86uB/view

⁴ <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/delegations/en/d-by/documents/ep-resolutions>

⁵ They are Sergei Skriba, Vice Rector of the Belarusian State Economic University for Educational Work; Sergey Rubnikovich, Rector of the Belarusian State Medical University; Aliaksandr Bakhanovich, Rector of the Brest State Technical University; Mikhail Borozna, Rector of the Belarusian State Academy of Arts. The complete list of sanctioned individuals can be found here:

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L:2021:219I:FULL&from=EN>